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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#) [IT](#) [NATO](#)

SUBJECT: EUR P/DAS VOLKER'S ROME CONSULTATIONS

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald Spogli, for reasons 1.4 (b)(d).

1. (C) Summary. During his visit to Rome, EUR P/DAS Volker discussed the Fund and Foundation for the Future, NATO and EU expansion, NATO/EU cooperation, Russia, and Latin America. Overall, the GOI shares our optimism that Europe will recover from the EU constitution debacle and that Turkish accession talks should proceed as scheduled. They agree we must better utilize NATO and the EU as institutions to promote a global democracy agenda and support the Fund/Foundation in principle as long as we can avoid duplication of the Barcelona Process. Italy's growing economic energy interest with Russia continues to dampen their concerns about Putin's domestic agenda. End Summary.

2. (U) EUR P/DAS Kurt Volker visited Rome September 6. Septel reports on his MFA meeting. Ambassador Spogli hosted Volker for lunch with Gianpaolo Scarante, Deputy Diplomatic Advisor to PM Berlusconi and Achille Amerio, Diplomatic Advisor to Defense Minister Martino. Volker also held a public diplomacy meeting with Italian journalists and think tanks.

3. (C) During lunch, Volker described his trip as being part of an effort to follow through on President Bush's renewed effort to strengthen work with Europe in addressing common challenges. He said we know we have to work together to solve global challenges and engage in the war of ideas. We want to engage Europe on challenges outside Europe while we continue to also make progress on Balkans issues. On NATO/EU, Volker stressed the importance of making these institutions effective instruments to implement shared goals rather than allowing institutional rivalries become obstacles to achieving those goals.

4. (C) In response to Scarante's question on the future of Europe, Volker said the administration was optimistic. Blair's re-election, Berlusconi's electoral prospects, plus better relations with France and Germany (with or without Chirac and Schroeder) and improved chances for center-right wins in Poland and elsewhere put us in a better position strategically than at any point in the last ten years. However, on EU enlargement prospects, Scarante and Amerio lamented decisions to hold referendums on the EU constitution and said that Europe would need some time to reflect and focus on domestic economic concerns. Scarante said this may delay Turkey's entry into the EU, but Italy continued to support the October 3 deadline for beginning accession talks. Overall, they said, Italy is also optimistic about Europe's future.

5. (C) Amerio expressed concern about NATO losing its identity and urged efforts to strengthen the political component of its leadership, perhaps through expanded PfP activities and more cooperation with the EU and UN. Volker agreed, noting that NATO's Mediterranean dialogue had been weak and lacked outreach to the Persian Gulf. This was a key reason for the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative and strengthening of the Med dialogue. He suggested that perhaps non-NATO EU states should be drawn closer into SHAPE planning and integration activities, if we could convince Turkey to support this. On NATO enlargement, Volker said we wanted to promote continued reform in the Adriatic Charter three by keeping prospects open for membership, but it was too soon to address this issue in 2006. We should plan to address membership in 2008.

6. (C) On BMENA, Volker said our interest was to build on the Sea Island Summit/Forum for the Future to increase support beyond the G-8 countries, especially since we were not convinced Russia would adequately address this initiative during its presidency. He described the Foundation and Fund proposals and urged Italian support. Scarante said PM Berlusconi supported the idea in principle but there were many Middle East initiatives and it was important to avoid duplication. He noted that Italy has a lot of experience in small business development in the Balkans. Italy would need to see how these new proposals fit into the Barcelona Process, but admitted it was not clear where Barcelona was

going.

17. (C) Scarante confirmed that A/S Fried,s message on the importance of encouraging democracy in Russia had been passed by PM Berlusconi during his meetings with President Putin at Socci. Discussions there were focused on economic issues, especially commercial energy cooperation, which grew by 55 percent in the last year (albeit with some help from rising oil prices). Volker noted that we had had high hopes during Putin,s early days but were increasingly disappointed over centralization of power, heavy-handed dealings with the Chechens, and Russia,s role in neighboring states. Scarante said the Russians remained very concerned about states they believe are in Moscow,s sphere of influence; Volker replied that we have to convince Russia that Ukraine and others are now independent countries, and it is in Moscow,s interest to have strong, democratic, market-oriented and prosperous countries on its borders. Amerio (who served in Moscow) commented that what was lacking was not democracy per se, but a series of checks and balances and development of horizontal, rather than just top-down, structures in government and society.

18. (C) In response to a Scarante question, Volker said our main issues of concern in South America were Venezuela and Cuba. In both cases, we would like to see EU countries adopt a more visible role in promoting democracy. In the case of Chavez, he uses European silence to try and single out the U.S. as his only detractor. On Cuba, we want to ensure that when the "wall" there falls, there will be democratic political activists in place in the model of Vaclev Havel in Velvet Revolution Prague. We were disappointed, therefore, by EU decisions that discouraged meetings with political dissidents.

19. (U) During a roundtable with press and think tanks: Volker expressed thanks for Italy,s Katrina relief, briefed the group on the new BMENA Foundation and Fund for the Future initiatives and answered questions. On BMENA, there was a suggestion by Italian participants that civil society building be concentrated on development of political parties. There was a lively discussion of whether the Iran nuclear issue would divide the U.S. and the EU.

110. (U) P/DAS VOLKER HAS CLEARED THIS MESSAGE.

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